Federation for Child Study Bulletin

For the purpose of helping parents make their parenthood more intelligent, more efficient, and of the highest use to their children.

Vol. 1

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No. 6

Summer Play Schools

Beatrice Borg Stein

SCHOOL closes—and vacation begins. Children everywhere are looking forward to this time as one for pleasure and freedom. But parents and educators see in this "freedom" a problem of long days of unsupervised pursuits, often in unwholesome surroundings, while to the children themselves "vacation" too often comes to mean only that school is closed.

What are the community's responsibilities and its resources for the supervision of these children during the months of the long vacation? In New York City, as in many other communities, available summer fresh air camps can care for only a small proportion of the children who need them, while even these fortunate few may (except in rare cases) enjoy only a meager two weeks of camp outing. The majority of city children must be otherwise provided for.

To meet this need the Summer Play School Com-

mittee of the Federation for Child Study has, for the past seven years, been working to develop a method which will utilize the resources of the community for the provision of a healthful, happy summer for these underprivileged children.

The first of their summer play schools was established in 1917 in the Hudson Guild Settlement House. Children of that neighborhood were admitted after a careful physical and medical examination, with preference given to the malnourished child, since there was not room for all. They were given a hot luncheon, followed by an hour's rest, and milk and crackers each afternoon. There was an all-day program for health and recreation, chiefly

carried on by volunteers. Two hundred children were cared for that first season, and the increase in weight and general well-being was marked.

Here, then, was a solution of the vacation problem. From both public and private civic agencies came immediate and enthusiastic response, and offer of their resources for utilization. Other localities in New York City, aroused to the needs and opportunities for such work, asked for assistance in organizing similar play schools.

Since that first school in 1917, there has been an increase in number and variety. This summer there will be fifteen play schools. Fourteen of these will be in New York City, widely distributed through congested districts, and one will be in Cleveland, where a group of workers, enthusiastic after watching the plan in New York, organized a play school two years ago which has been carried on with great success.



So flexible is the method used in the play schools that the aims are realized in many varying situations: they have been organized on roof-tops of hospitals, in settlement houses, in public school buildings, and in well-equipped plants of modern private schools. These schools care for groups varying from fifty to three hundred children. The original play school was organized to care for children between the ages of five and fifteen, but last year, in response to a request from a day nursery, a nursery school was organized for children as young as two years. In cooperation with the Cardiac Committee of the Public Education Association, and the various hospital social service departments, cardiac children are included in many of the groups, participating in regular play-school activities.

Each year has seen new features added to the work. All of the activities, which parallel to a great extent those found in a well-conducted camp, are now under the leadership of trained and experienced teachers. Teachers' conferences, as well as children's councils, are held periodically during the summer to give opportunity for the expression of ideas and suggestions arising out of their own participation in the work.

A canteen or central kitchen now sends out hundreds of nutritious hot lunches each day, prepared under the supervision of a trained dietitian, and carried by motor service to those schools having no kitchen equipment of their own. An abundance of fresh vegetables is supplied almost daily from country gardens of friends of the Play Schools, including members of the Junior League of the Summer Play School Committee. The luncheons become an opportunity to teach the relation of wholesome food to health, as well as the social value of orderly and well-conducted meal-times.

Perhaps the most significant outgrowth of the Play School work has been the opportunity it has opened for carrying education to the parents. The teaching of hygiene and proper food habits has been brought into the homes in follow-up visits by nurses and dietitians, especially in the case of undernourished children. Mothers' groups have been organized, and some of these have carried on through the winter season, inviting speakers to address them on child study topics.

As to the plan of organization of the Summer Play Schools: Each school or center raises its own budget and provides its space and equipment. The Play School Committee of the Federation for Child Study is the organizing, directing and standardizing body, selecting central teachers, assisting in the planning of programs, and unifying the work of the schools through conferences and critical comparison. It provides the supervisor and his assistants, the health supervisor and dietitian for all the schools, the secretary, and the central office. Special teachers of choral, craft, cobbling

and nature study are engaged by the Federation and are "rented" by the hour to local schools, thus securing for them a higher quality of teaching ability than such small units could readily obtain for themselves. Some of the teachers are assigned from the vacation playground list of the Board of Education and paid by the city, while the remainder are paid from the local budgets. In New York City the Board of Education has been most cooperative. In addition to designating teachers and supplies to each center, it provides kitchen equipment, and even supplies transportation for the cardiac children in motor busses. It seems, too, that every city department and public and private agency has been ready to enter into the game of making the summer-time happier for the children and has come forward with offers of cooperation. Excursions, picnics, baseball treats and abundant milk supplies have been among the things made possible by such cooperation.

An effort is made to send away to fresh air camps all those children at the play schools who are most in need of the air and sunshine of the country, and since at best that means only two or three weeks away from the city, these children are allowed to attend Play School the rest of the summer, in order to conserve the benefits they have derived from their weeks in the country. Wherever possible the activities of the Play Schools themselves are carried on out-of-doors, while excursions to parks and near-by country bring field and lake to these city children.

Although the Summer Play Schools now being conducted are located in large cities, the plan is so elastic that it may be modified and simplified, and adapted to communities of any size.

Thus the Play Schools are pointing the way to all-year-round schooling—demonstrating that the summer vacation period need not be one of mental, moral and physical deterioration and waste for children who live in unsupervised or congested districts, but may become a source of health, education, and happiness to them, and of opportunity and satisfaction to teachers and parents.



Mary Discovers Play School

Josette Frank

MARY sat on the stone steps of her tenement home. The street was alive with the early morning activities of drays and pushcarts, vendors called their wares, and the hot street echoed their calls, while women with bulging market bags made their way back and forth in the crowd, bargaining here and there for their day's provisions.

There really was no room for Mary in that street.

Here, at last, was the vacation she had so longed for. School had closed last week, and Mary was free—free to "have fun." But where? And how? She had gone once to the open square, where the big girls were playing hopscotch, and the little girls were just "sitting around." She had sought

the cool sanctuary of the neighborhood settlement house, but found that her club there had disbanded, and the kind lady who had led the club had gone away for the summer. And here, after a week of vacation and freedom, Mary had exhausted the possibilities of the block. She sat listless on the stoop, waiting vaguely for something diverting to happen.

Her cousin Tony emerged from the tenement next door, jumped down the three steps of the stoop, and started

toward the corner with an air of preoccupation. "Where you going?" called Mary as he passed

"School," he called back, and paused a moment. "School's closed." Mary wondered at his ignorance.

"Play School, I mean."

"What's that?" Mary was mildly interested.

"C'mon along, and I'll show you."

The two children arrived together at the big house where many other children had arrived before them. A lady greeted them. She was a pleasant, smiling teacher, and seemed very glad to see them.

She sent Tony off to join "the fellers" in the workshop, where he had important work to do, shaping various bits of shapeless wood which was destined to become a boat, and sail the sea in Central Park. Mary, she took by the hand and led off to a room that was very cool and clean. Here

a kindly doctor looked down Mary's throat, weighed her, thumped her chest, listened to her heart beat, and pronounced her perfectly well though a bit under weight. Then the teacher took Mary out onto a big covered roof where boys and girls, all about her own age, were playing a wonderful new game she had never seen before. With a wave of her hand the teacher in the center of the ring invited her to join in, and Mary was soon jumping with delight in a round of games both old and new, until finally, panting but reluctant to leave off, she found herself following the other children into another room where chairs were arranged before a desk, at which sat another teacher. This, she thought, was going to be like school. But soon

children all clustered around teacher's desk, on which were the most fascinating things: A big bowl of live, wriggling fishes caught her eye, and next to that was a tiny turtle, and some green things with colored flowers among them, and then a big shell shaped like a star. Mary was even permitted to put her hands on the turtle, and the teacher told them wonderful stories about all these strange things, and where they grow and how they live, and prom-

ised to take them to the coun-

CHORAL CARS & CRAFES A PLAY SCHOOL DAY

try one day to show them many more wonders.

After that all the children went to a very big room, and there seemed to be lots of other children there too. And somebody played the piano while everyone sang together, songs which all the children knew—and how they shouted!

Mary was getting hungry, and she began to speculate on what might be waiting for her on the table at home—there would probably be some bread, and cold sausage which her mother had left there before she went to her day's work; and she would warm up some coffee left on the stove from breakfast. She looked about for Tony, and found him coming up the stairs damp but happy from his morning swim in the pool. "Want to go home and get lunch!" she told him. "What for?" said the knowing Tony, "you get lunch here."

The teacher Mary had first seen looked in at the door for a moment: "Hadn't we all better get cleaned up for lunch?" she suggested. There was

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No. 6

The Open Season

For most city children of school age summer is the open season for mischief and worse. Idleness and emptiness are available in large volume, producing their well-known effect, while neglect furnishes abundant opportunity for those rank weeds that are the despair of educators and social workers.

In view of the principles and attitudes that the Federation for Child Study had been developing among its members for over a quarter of a century, it was inevitable that the Summer Play schools which it organized in 1917 should rapidly pass from an emergency measure of protection during war-time, to a significant experiment station in the full-time care of children. The play schools have taken for granted that a child must be kept in good health, that he must play, that he must work, that he must adventure and explore. There has been a program of varied activities in which the child is given an opportunity to discover himself and his complex environment of people and things and institutions, and at the same time such guidance as to make his day by day experience contribute most fully to his development. The health service and the meals are no less "educational" than the art work and the nature study. And while the children show marked gains of the kind the educator is constantly seeking, they never discover that they are being educated.

The methods followed bring the parents into more intimate contact with the school, the children and the teachers, and so carry valuable results beyond the confines of the school.

A distinctive feature of the play schools, important in these days of complaint against the rising cost of education and other community service, is the fact that they furnish a form of organization that can make full use of a wide range of agencies, official and voluntary, and coordinate

their efforts so as to get increasing results at relatively diminishing costs.

It is to be hoped that cities large and small in all parts of the country, taking advantage of the Play School experience of the past seven years, will study their resources and adapt them to the needs of their children, so that the summer will come to be as valuable a part of the educational year as the more formal "schooling" established by law.

Teacher Training

For teachers the Play Schools offer an exceptional opportunity to acquire, along with their scientific and sympathetic attitude toward children, a valuable technique for dealing with the child as a whole. Here the teacher sees the child in relation to his play, his food habits, his health and social adjustments, with opportunity and facilities for relating and coordinating the teaching of elementary subjects with the child's other activities. Proof of the value of this type of teaching carried on in the Summer Play Schools is evidenced by a request from New York University to establish, in cooperation with the American Child Health Association, a training school in one of the Summer Play Schools, where graduate students registering in Health courses at the University may do student teaching, earning from two to four extra credits. In addition to its value in working out a teacher training technique, this project offers a splendid opportunity to spread the Play School idea throughout the country.

The Junior League

A real spirit of service—of community sharing is building up the Junior League of the Summer Play School Committee. In sending supplies of fresh vegetables for the daily luncheons and materials for nature study in the classroom, and providing special "treats" and picnics, the children of the Junior League are organizing their resources in an effort to bring the joys of a country vacation into the lives of these city children. The eagerness and enthusiasm with which these children. whose whole summer is spent at camp or country homes, enter into the game of sharing their plenty with the children of the Play Schools is an evidence of the League's social and ethical value to its own members-of equal importance with its helpfulness toward the well-being of the Play School children.

Play School Activities



Health Work begins before the opening of the Play Schools, and carries on long after they have closed. children are physically examined before entrance by a designated physician. Where special defects are found they are referred to clinics for remedial treatment. Posture

cases are given corrective exercises at Play School. The children are weighed periodically, and given frequent hygiene instruction, including care of teeth, proper rest, open air, clothing, cleanliness and posture. The health work at the Ethical Culture Play School is made possible by a fund given in memory of Phillip Waldheim.

Hot lunches consisting of one hearty main dish, plenty of milk, bread and butter, and dessert are served each noon and crackers and milk in the afternoon. Rest periods after lunch vary from one to two hours, according to the age of

the group.

Undernourished children are provided with extra milk, when advised by the doctor, and special instruction is given to these children and their parents in the right choosing of food and proper home habits.

An interesting project is the making of the Home Beautiful, using a model flat designed as nearly as possible like the district flats which the children live in. Each room is taken separately, and the children work cooperatively on

As a means of vitalizing the health work—cultivating mental as well as physical health—woodcraft groups are formed, and even carried through the winter months, giving the children a real contact with nature out-of-doors.



The Canteen supplies noonday luncheon to those schools having no facilities of their own for the preparation of a complete meal. Over six hundred hot luncheons are daily prepared and sent out from the Central Kitchen.

Supplies of fresh vegetables

and fruits are sent almost daily from the country gardens of friends interested in the Play Schools and the Canteen is thus enabled to serve, at little cost, a lunch rich in vitamines and mineral salts.

The mere provision of a well-balanced adequate lunch, however, does not meet the whole problem in dealing with children of racial prejudice and unsound food habits. Canteen workers instruct the children and their mothers in the necessity for wholesome diet, teaching mother the recipes for the foods her child likes and should have, and adapting these to her racial tastes and habits.



The Manual Arts courses provide some of the most fruitful of the Play Schools' From the woodactivities. working shops, where boys and girls alike find joyful expression for the normal impulse to experiment with tools, come forth boats, doll's

for the home like ironing-boards, hat-trees, and bookshelves. In the print-shop the children learning the delightful mysteries of setting up type, turn out assembly programs, cards, and the annual booklet. Arts and crafts groups develop original products in clay, cardboard or raffia. In the sewing-room the girls are cultivating a taste for the beauty of simplicity while creating serviceable articles for home and personal use. Each of these groups

rejoices in making its appropriate contribution to the cooperative working out of a doll's house or model room or other such community project.

Nature Study in the Play School is less an activity of the classroom than of the field. When the regular picnic excursion groups set out for their long happy day in the open, with them goes the nature study instructor, to lose no opportunity to open the eyes accustomed only to



city streets to the secrets of plant and animal life in its native environment. Fresh specimens secured by the children themselves on these outings, together with those helpfully sent by friends in country homes, provide material for study and loving care in the classroom. Thus prepared, the children are able to make use, with an enlightened interest, of the museum facilities so richly avail-

Staff Meetings for all the teachers in the Play Schools are held in the form of a series of social gatherings in the evening, to give relaxation and to help create group spirit, as well as afternoon conferences at which there are expositions of the aims and methods of the Play Schools, and round table discussions of the problems confronting each particular phase of the work, with written suggestions for their solution. The papers thus prepared are filed at the office of the Federation and carefully studied.

"Plums" during the summer's activities are those pleasures which drop unexpectedly into the child's play, unscheduled upon the pro-gram and thereby enriching it just so much the more because of the element of surprise. Among last season's generous assortment of this



riult were grandstand seats for baseball games, launch rides up the Hudson, campfire picnic on the Palisades, admission to jolly, appropriate movies, and many smaller plums such as bus rides or ice-cream treats.

In the Choral Classes the children of the Summer Play Schools find healthy means of self-expression and stimulation. Children naturally love to sing. Teach a child to sing a beautiful song, and the child, for the moment, lives the song. Increase the moments of beautiful living, and you shape the child's character. "No character is strong until it attains a harmony within itself."

While Recreation is a part of practically every activity of the program, some of the activities are purely recreational: Games of all types, from the so-called quiet games, which are sometimes anything but quiet in their reaction of healthy laughter, to hand-ball and baseball; pantomimes and



dramatics, with homemade costumes and properties, and often homemade plots as well; dancing for every child, from the kindergarten up, boys as well as girls; swimming, taught under good instructors wherever a pool is available with at least the joy of splashing under a shower or hose if there can be no swimming lesson; and outings of whole days in parks or woods, sometimes with a jolly union of two or three schools to make opportunity for broader social horizons and friendly rivalry in team game contests.

Mary Discovers Play School

(Continued from page 3)

a great shout of approval as the children rushed down the stairway to the washroom. Evidently lunch was a popular part of the day's program here. Mary could understand and share this enthusiasm,—but why need one wash for lunch? But it seemed that this, too, was just a game. Everybody washed hands and face, and even ears. It was fun—and Mary joined in.

Lunch was a strange orderly affair. Everybody sat at little tables, and things were brought on a tray, and distributed to each one by the little girl who sat at the head. There was soup. And then there was meat with something else that Mary liked and that tasted something like spinach, but couldn't be spinach for it wasn't at all like the stringy greens her mother sometimes made, which she never would eat. Then there was pudding and milk. Mary hated milk. She would like to ask for coffee. But everybody was drinking milk, so Mary decided to try. She managed to finish her glass. She was to learn later the reasons why milk was very good for her and coffee very bad.

After luncheon Mary went to the roof, where cots were put up in rows and everybody lay down to rest for an hour—each on a cot by herself. It

was pleasant to just lie there and wonder what would happen next.

Rest-hour over, Mary helped some other children make covers and curtains and chairs for a wonderful big doll's house they were furnishing. Such pretty rooms for the doll to live in! Mary wished she could make her own rooms look like that. She saw some of the bigger girls sewing pretty dresses and aprons and hats for themselves to wear.

Then everybody began to put away things—needles, scissors and materials were laid neatly on shelves, ready for use the next day. Mary realized that her wonderful day was coming to an end. She was reluctant to leave this delightful place! She sought the teacher who had first welcomed her to Play School.

"Please may I come to-morrow?"

"Yes, and every day, if you want to, for the rest of the summer!"

Mary went back to her tenement stoop again, to sit there and wait for her Mother's return from her day's work. But vacation was no longer a blank for her. The summer stretched ahead as a shining vision of successive days of fun and companionship in cool, pleasant places.



Out of such seething, hot, playless streets as this, the children of this Play School are lifted high above the city's narrow, tenement-evalled canyons, to a clean roof-top, cooled by fresh breezes from river and sea. Here space and equipment are available for healthy play, for exercise and rest, and even for a bit of real gardening—and the summer day is all too short.



Play School Activities

(Continued from page 5)

Advisory or House Councils are organized locally to encourage the children to express themselves and to work out their own civic standards. Two or three times during the summer delegates from these local councils meet together in a Children's Central Educational Council. Here they take up, very seriously, suggestions for bettering the Play Schools. Each year they also try to contribute some one thing to the community at large, and last season, stimulated by the publicity given to the litter left in parks by careless picnickers, the children organized a "Campaign for Cleanliness," which took many amusing forms in the various local schools. One school had a Civic Club, another a Sanitary Bureau, many had Keep Klean Klubs, while one enterprising group organized the entire block for cleaner streets, taking the high old-fashioned stoops thereon for a symbol, with a slogan, "Stoop Week, the Talk of the Block!"

The Mothers of the Play School children are organized into groups which meet two or three times during the summer, with smaller conferences between the meetings whenever there is a demand for them. Besides informal entertainments by the children, following a proud display of "What they are doing in Summer Play School," the meetings are addressed by speakers on general health problems, and on various phases of child behavior such as discipline, children's lies, children's fears, use of money, movies and amusements. Wherever possible the groups are carried through the winter, when the Nutrition Committee and the Lecture Bureau cooperate in giving a series of talks. In this way the child's physical and mental development is further aided by the creation of a better understanding between the parent and the child.

As They See the Play Schools

"It is my firm belief that the play schools have steadily revealed that they will ultimately become an essential part of the educational program of the city."

Eugene C. Gibney, Director, Extension Activities, Board of Education, New York City.

"Your work has been invaluable not only in improving the physical condition of the children who attended, but also in helping to raise the standard of living in the neighborhood through the ideals set before the children, and through the instruction they received in the vital matters of personal hygiene, proper foods, good healthy homes."

Pauline Goerlich, Principal, P. S. 94, Manhattan, New York City.

"The story of how Madison House took up Play School work and how Play School work took up Madison House is a long one—but the Play School work is on its budget once and for good. The needs of continued development of this most important work are thoroughly understood and appreciated, and have secured a permanent place among our 'most essential' or 'irreducible minimum' items on the annual budget."

M. Kirchberger, Board of Trustees, Madison House, New York City.

"Teacher: It would be nicer if there was play school when there wasn't no block party and block party when there wasn't no play school so you wouldn't have to miss nothing."

Thomas Pagalieri, Aged 9.

"I hate Saturdays and Sundays since Play School started. Why didn't we have Play School before."

Gussie Rosen, Aged 11.

"Another summer has come and gone. We, the Mothers' Club, have a special reason to be thankful to Madison House that memories of the summer will always be happy ones. Our children spent the days in safe, interesting and educational play out of harm's way."

Mothers' Club of Madison House.

Books Received to Be Reviewed

The Health of the Runabout Child. Wm. Palmer Lucas. The Macmillan Company, \$1.75.

Fitting the School to the Child. Irwin and Marks. The Macmillan Company, \$2.00.

Law and Freedom. George A. Coe. University of Chicago Press, \$1.75.

Personality and Social Adjustment. Ernest R. Groves. Longmans, Green and Co., \$1.40.

Then and Now in Education. Otis W. Caldwell and Stuart A. Courtis. World Book Company, \$2.20.

Note to Subscribers

Requests have been received from libraries for December and January issues of the Bulletin (Vol. I, No. 1 and 2), which are now out of print. The editors would appreciate any available copies of these numbers.

Book Reviews

Education Moves Ahead. Eugene Randolph Smith. Atlantic Monthly Press, \$2.00

The title of this book indicates forward action which, applied especially to education, signifies progress. The aims of education are presented as follows:

"Education must include physical preparation for life... It must provide the fundamental preparation that will help each to earn a living... It must give the child a mastery of the fundamentals of learning... It must train him, to such an extent as is possible, in the habit of logical thinking... It must develop the power to appreciate and enjoy that which is beautiful and fine... It must try to develop such qualities as those of initiative, originality, imagination and leadership... Above all it must build social and moral character."

The author proceeds to show how the teachers interpret these aims in the practical working out of the curriculum with the children. Particularly valuable is the chapter on "The School as a Health Factor." Here attention is called to the great advantage the school as such has to work on the basis of preventive medical treatment, because in the schools all the children of the country are assembled and opportunity is given there, as nowhere else, to survey and care for them physically.

Tests of the major organs are advocated: examination of the throat, mouth, eyes and ears, the feet and the spine; blood tests and urine analysis. Defects which cannot be cared for by the school are reported to the home for treatment by family physician or specialist. Another health factor is school equipment. Proper light, proper ventilation and school furniture, the desk and chair to be suited to the size of each child.

The positive side of health development is well taken into account by means of opportunity for physical recreation—"the play that is the greatest factor in giving them (the children) sound, strong bodies, quickly responsive to their wills." The author stresses the fact that the major part of physical recreation should be games and free play rather than formal gymnastic exercise—games and play to be out-of-doors almost irrespective of the weather. The greatest values that come from the playground, however, are the social and moral ones—"Social adaptation, open-mindedness to the viewpoint of others, ability to win without boasting, to lose without rancor, to put team play above individual triumph, cooperation above selfishness."

Other chapters of great interest and information are those that treat on the new methods of teaching the fundamentals in arithmetic, the "silent reading method" as compared with the oral method. "Interest and the School Work," the mental tests in "Studying the Individual," the value of appreciation and expression in art and music.

Throughout the reader is impressed with the judgment of a

Throughout the reader is impressed with the judgment of a school person of great experience who appreciates and adopts the best of the past and courageously but "with reverence" discards useless traditions and outworn theories. "In making the changes," he concludes, "let us not become obsessed with any one method or system. The limitations of any system, or of the thought of any one man or woman or any group of men and women, are too narrow for the education of a race."

B. G.

Living With Our Children. Clara D. Pierson. E. P. Dutton & Co. \$2.00.

Mrs. Pierson has brought before us our own everyday experiences in the management of our children, and has contrived to show us, without the use of technical philosophy or psychology just where and how we have failed, and, fortunately, where and how we have succeeded. She has been especially happy in her choice of examples for illustrating her points and there is surely hardly a mother who reads this simple little book who has not been confronted with practically every situation described. And in every case her solutions are possible to all of us. It is a privilege as well as a joy to be so sympathetically written to. The book answers a very definite need for simple, sane and understandable reading matter which may be placed in the hands of parents to help them in the perplexing problems of child guidance. R. E. S.

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SUMMER PLAY SCHOOLS

1924

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Ethical Culture School 33 Central Park West

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> Grosvenor House 321 East 49th Street

Hamilton House 72 Market Street

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